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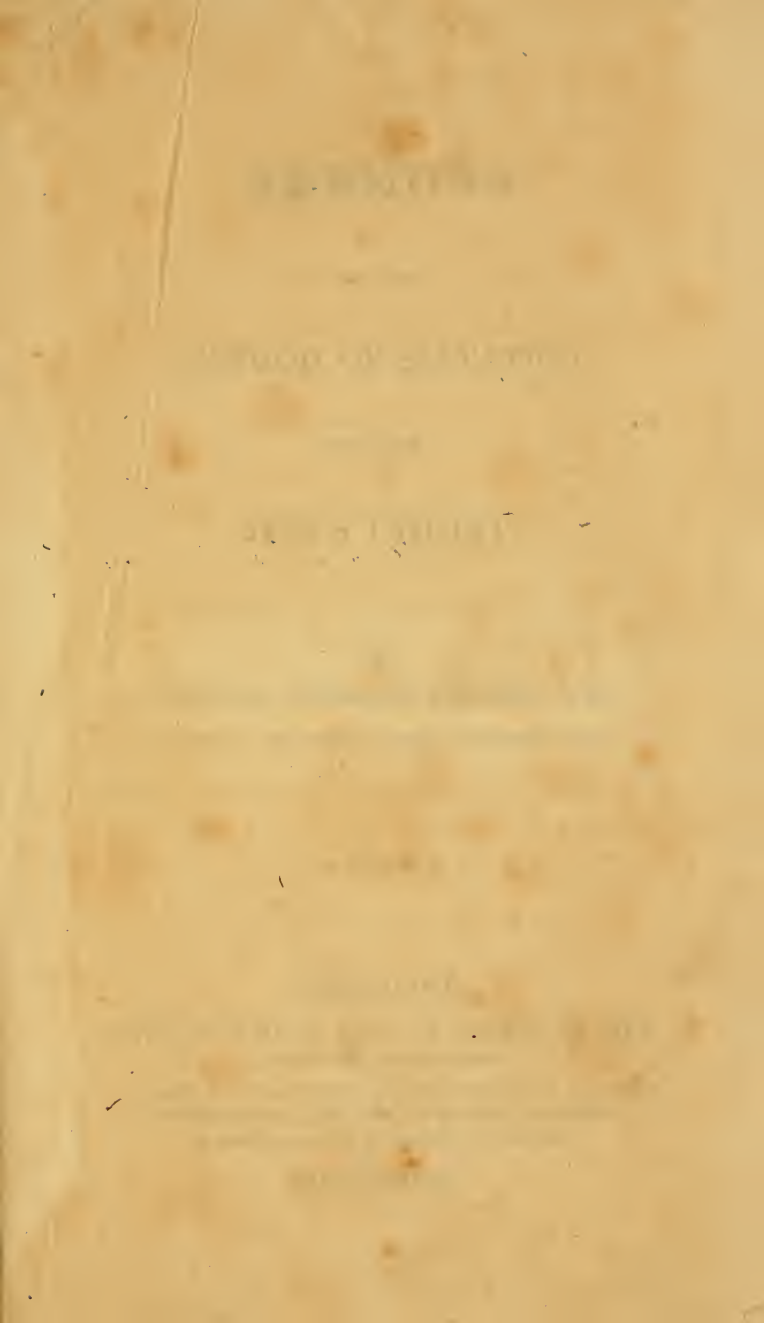
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SERMONS
ON THE
METHOD OF SALVATION
THROUGH
JESUS CHRIST.

BY
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PREFACE.

IF it should be considered of any importance to enquire, why it was deemed proper, in an age when the press is teeming with sermons from every hand, to offer such a volume as the present to the public, the author has only to reply, that these Sermons having been preached in his ordinary course for the elucidation of the important subject which they embrace, the propriety of publishing them was suggested to him from a quarter wherein he could have apprehended no other motive to have operated than the persuasion of their being calculated to be useful ; and that, in deference to the opinion thus expressed,

more than to any judgment of his own of their value, he, with some reluctance, and at the risk of being thought obtrusive, brought his mind to decide on their publication.

He was confirmed in this decision by the conviction, that the Economy of Human Redemption cannot be exhibited in its relations and with due effect by sermons, unless in the connected and continuous form of a Treatise, seldom adopted, in which the sermons now presented appear. He will not presume to suppose that he has been able to supply any thing like a suitable or adequate representation of so momentous and comprehensive a subject, particularly in the narrow compass to which he has judged it right to confine himself; but he does venture to hope, that the following attempt, however imperfect, to present the leading truths of the Gospel to the intelligent classes of the community in a connected, and popular, and scriptural form, may

not be unprofitable to some. And if the Lord shall be pleased to grant a measure of usefulness, which it is earnestly besought he may of his own goodness do, the author holds that he would not be warranted, however natural it might be, to feel much concern as to what may otherwise befall this his first attempt before the public.



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SERMON I.

ON MAN'S BONDAGE IN AN UNCONVERTED STATE.

JOHN viii. 36.—If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

THE mention of freedom, or a deliverance, for mankind, implies that they are in bondage of some sort ; and, such is the pride of human nature, prompting man to deny what would degrade him, that if he thought he could maintain his ground, he would instantly repel the charge of being enslaved, and would reject the offer of a deliverer with scorn. If we find the Gospel charge of man's being sinful and lost, differently entertained and quietly borne in a land of Christians, it is because they have become early fami-

liar with it ; they have heard it always said that men were sinners ; the charge equally applies to all, and therefore is not thought or felt to be a slur on any one. By a certain tact of avoiding what gives pain, a habit is formed in the mind of averting the point of conviction from itself, and this it does by resolving every charge into something general belonging to all, which just operates as if it concerned none.

In preaching the Gospel, which asserts directly the guilty and enslaved condition of mankind, and which also declares the necessity of a Divine deliverer,—a truth implying that men are sinful and helpless to a degree that makes it utterly impossible for them to save themselves, and that if relief comes they must be beholden to a Saviour for it ; we present the view which God gives, and the estimate which God has formed, of the condition of our race. Men might have pride enough even to impugn what God says ; but sinfulness is too palpable an attribute of human nature, and conscience is yet too strong, to allow of their denying the charge altogether. They protect them-

selves, therefore, from the pain it occasions by such evasions as we have noticed ; by which admitted truth is deprived of its legitimate influence on the mind. The Gospel is made ineffectual, not by denial of its truths, but by a compromise man has made with his conscience, that they shall not be applied personally. These are melancholy circumstances for a rational being to be placed in ; —like a child, who thinks he avoids an impending danger, by shutting his eyes upon it.

Our course in ministering the Gospel, however, is plain. We must assert and reassert what God declares, both as to the danger and the mode of recovery of sinners, whether they will hear or forbear—apply or evade ; being assured that the time will speedily arrive when God shall vindicate and establish his truth against all denial and evasion. At the same time, our duty is to pray that men may be brought personally to apply the truth that they may be saved.

Intending to offer somewhat of an enlarged view of the great deliverance wherewith Christ maketh free, we begin with this implied and fun-

damental truth,—*That all natural or unconverted men are in bondage.*

I. *The nature* of this bondage falls to be considered.

Need we say that it is not an excusable bondage, and the object of mere commiseration like the physical slavery of the body, which may be imposed and continued by injustice and compulsion; but *moral*, in the disposition of the mind, which is inclined to evil, and therefore culpable and degrading, as would be that of slaves who should love their chains and seek not to be free? It consists in the soul's subjection to a ruling sinful disposition, opposed to God and his law, and in its subjection too to the effects inseparable from such a state of the soul,—to condemnation from the divine law,—to increasing pollution of mind,—and to liability to Satan's temptations.

We shall endeavour to trace it in these particulars.

The *first* of these, the *condemning* power, it derives from the divine law, which attached, by

an unalterable eternal decree, penalty to transgression, saying, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. "The day thou eatest," saith God to Adam, "thou shalt *surely* die;" not *then* fixing the penalty, but declaring the great truth, founded in the nature of God and his government, that sin and penalty should be inseparable. This is the *curse* spoken of, Gal. iii. 20, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, written in the book of the law to do them." This is the condemnation already upon them that believe not.

The power of condemnation, then, sin has from the law; "The strength of sin" (in this respect) "is the law*." This sentence of law rests upon our condition, and materially affects our present state as well as our future destinies, though we may not consciously have the slightest apprehension of it. The soul, as an accursed territory, is left to its own corruption and barrenness, unvisited by the light or dews of heaven. It is the soil on which the avenger treads in all its length and breadth, as that legally assigned him.

* 1 Cor. xv. 56.

See in this the facility which condemnation gives to the polluting power of sin and to the intrusions of Satan, and the impossibility there is that the condemned should be free.

The designation given to the curse of the law is *death*; but the amount of this infliction, when it takes full effect at last, has never yet been ascertained in the experience of any of our fallen race on earth: none have returned to tell what death is when completed,—to relate the feelings of a soul fully exposed to the frowns of offended justice, or to depict the horrors of evil disposition unmitigated, and of despair interminable. We know only what the word of God says of the second death, and of the place where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. This tremendous impending evil seems to have as its forerunner or harbinger in the soul on earth, an undefinable awe, the parent of superstition, which, far from having any beneficial effect, powerfully operates to drive men to the intoxications of sinful pleasure, as an opiate to soothe the wounded spirit, and makes them dread approaching God.

2d, The *polluting* power of Sin.—No one is entirely ignorant of the injurious influence of the appetites and passions—“of the lusts that war against the soul,” of “the law of the members warring against the law of the mind.” Many, however, are regardless of the working in the hidden man of the heart of those spiritual passions, “the lusts of the mind,” which are equally known to God, and marked by him as those which express themselves in overt acts, and which, as attaching to the spirit, or higher and more enduring part of man, are more evil and odious to God. Still more are unable to discover any thing like unity of character, and concurrence of operation, in these ever changing passions, for morally polluting human nature and opposing God : they appear like accidental and contradictory movements without any fixed direction ; nay, it may seem that the check which one of these forces opposes to another is salutary ; and we may well allow that much of what passes for morals in the world, is nothing more than the restraining of one evil passion by the counter operation of another equal-

ly offensive in the sight of God. How common is it to have sordid love of gain as alone the cause of temperance; vanity the only source of religious and moral acting; and pride producing self-denial in one quarter, that it may have larger scope in another; and men, supposing that by playing them off thus one against the other, and by opposing them all by considerations of reason and self-interest, they may be made harmless, and will be finally subdued.

But to understand this matter aright, we must go deeper into human nature, and inquire what that great principle in the mind is, from which these movements spring, and to which they minister. It is the love of *gratifying self*. This is the great master-passion, the great leading disposition of fallen man. The passions or propensities may be various in their kind, in their movements, and in the measure of their exercise: but they have this in common, that they all, and in all their movements, are employed to gratify self; and this taste or love for self-gratifying becomes, by a law of our nature, stronger by every indul-

gence.* Now, if it shall be found, that this leading disposition of human nature is itself the very essence of sin, it must be allowed that what ministers to it and increases it, pollutes human nature.

In advancing such a position as that the disposition of gratifying self, as found in fallen human nature, is the very essence of sin, we may expect to have it questioned in some such manner as this:—What! is it possible that any living being should not have the desire of gratifying himself, or, what is tantamount, should not have the desire of happiness, or, if such a thing were

* Believing as we do, that all that are called passions or propensities are but an excess or misdirection of some original property of human nature, and that there are no new properties or faculties, as to their essence, introduced by the altered circumstances of man; believing also that each of these original propensities has a peculiar object or class of objects to which it seeks, by a native impulse in itself, and in which it finds enjoyment; we would not be held to mean, that the selfish principle either begets the passion or its impulse, both being native and original, but that it excites and gives direction to its movements, so as to subserve its purpose, in the same manner as any strong passion employs the other powers of the soul, each in its own way, to do it service; just as the cupidity of the thief employs the noblest power, the understanding, to devise and regulate schemes for its wicked purposes.

possible, would existence be desirable on those terms? The objection is plausible, and we admit readily, that the desire of happiness is an essential attribute of rational existence. But we do not admit that it ought to have the primary place; that high place belongs to another disposition, and the desire of happiness has, or ought to have, a place secondary and subservient to that disposition.

In the original creation of man, God formed him to be in relation with himself, and accommodated him in his soul to that universal law which was the bond of this connexion between Himself and his creatures. The great enactment of that law was, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." This fundamental clause in the divine law enjoined, as the leading disposition in the creature, supreme love to God. God wrote this disposition on the human heart; it was the primary one, the ground of all moral movement, and in acting from this great motive, God provided that there should be a gratification of incalculable amount and duration to the creature. He thus put creature gratification in the second place;

but by this he did not lower it in character, or lessen it in degree. On the contrary, by putting the love of God first, he opened up, in the divine nature, to which this disposition attracted man, an infinite field of excellence for observation and enlargement of feeling, which should never cease to produce the purest and most intense happiness.

Man, in the fall, by violating the law of God, broke his relation with God ; lost the primary disposition of loving God imprinted at his first creation ; ceased to retain the knowledge of God : and then his secondary property, the desire of happiness, sought created objects with which he was surrounded, with them to gratify himself : He took the world instead of God as his object, and sent out all his propensities to draw gratification from this new object ; need we say, how mean in the comparison !

The sin, then, in his present state of heart, is not that he desires to be happy viewed in the abstract, but that he seeks for his own gratification the *primary* place, or that self-love occupies the place of the love of God, and that he has chosen

the world as his delight rather than God. "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord ; for my people have committed two evils, they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."* This state of the heart is essentially polluted and wicked. The exercise of the passions ministering to it, and giving it indulgence, strengthens it, and thereby increases the pollution of our natures. And if we consider moral purity to consist in conformity to the divine law, which is the true standard of purity, then we must see that the selfish or carnal mind which is enmity to God, is not subject to it, neither indeed can be.

Thus, that law has as its first and great enactment " Love the Lord thy God," which is essentially opposed to the selfish principle. The one cannot be ascendant without the dethronement of the other ; it is the contrariety in their very essence, of these two antagonist principles, that causes enmity to arise in the selfish or carnal

* Jer. ii. 12, 13.

mind whenever the demand of the law for the ascendancy of its great principle stands fully out. The carnal man would willingly do many things of what the law requires, but to put God before himself is too much.

3d, Satanic temptation.—The legal captivity to Satan by the curse of the law has already been adverted to. He assaulted our first parents with temptation when in innocency, but it seems to have been from *without*, by verbal persuasion, and by exhibition to the senses, addressed to desires and principles, and tastes that were natural and legitimate. The *sanctuary* of the *mind* does not appear to have been permitted to be invaded. Christ being sinless could say, “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing *in me*.” But soon as they became accursed or subjects of penalty, became of the same class, and occupied one common ground with Satan as fallen and apostate, there seemed to be a nearer fellowship established, a fuller access to the mind given, as well as sympathies formed which facilitated the temptation to sin which he employed against them,

and which, as a powerful and designing spirit, he was able to manage successfully and covertly. Of Judas it is said that "Satan *entered* into him." The permission seems to have been given him in his character of *avenger*, thus to operate against the children of disobedience, still under limitation, *saving* certain points necessary to their moral freedom and natural existence, and to the accomplishment of certain designs of heaven. This restriction is intimated in the narrative of the Book of Job regarding Satan. See chap. i. ver. 7-12; and chap. ii. ver. 1-7. The Scripture is clear as to the existence, power, extensiveness, and polluting efficacy of this agency. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world *." Satan is called "the spirit that *ruleth* in the *children* of disobedience." "Ye," saith Christ, "are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye do."

The great object of satanic malignity is to re-

* Eph. vi. 12.

tain the creature in sin, and, when under a remedial system, to prevent the soul's coming under the operation of this system so as to be recovered to God. Satan at present requires no direct recognition of himself; he allows the self we have spoken of to rule and be obeyed, because that is enough to secure the reign of sin. He will allow men to do many good things, if so be that they exalt themselves on that ground. He will become the patron of religious systems, if so be that in spirit and bearing they are adverse to God's way of salvation. He acts by system not to prompt to all sins, and at all times in utter recklessness. The grand point with him is to prevent man's becoming acquainted with the gospel way of escape. He aims to effect this object; 1st, by endeavouring to conceal from men their real condition and danger, and persuading them that they are sufficiently good and safe as they are; and, O! how many myriads of blinded self-complacent creatures does he retain captives by this delusion; men who say, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace," and who go down to

death with the "lie" which he palmed upon them, "in their right hands." 2d, He attempts directly to obscure the gospel. "If our gospel be hid, it is from them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not*." He persuades them that the gospel is mysterious, and to their poor benighted and deceived minds it must appear strange; and he would have them believe that all that is essential in religion must be plain to every one, cruelly concealing from them that what makes it mysterious, is their ignorance of the first principles of divine government and human responsibility, and the complication of evil, and the terribleness of the condemnation under which they lie. It is a remedy commensurate to an evil which they have never felt or imagined; and so it is inconceivable. This moral binding of the mind by deceptions, those chains of darkness, constitute the strength of Satan's enslaving power over the children of disobedience.

* 2 Cor. iv. 4.

II. *Proof* corroborative of the Scripture representation of this bondage, may be drawn,

1st, From *Death and its appearances*.—The terror which death impresses gives it all the character of a penal infliction; it seems not an ordinary process of nature, such as certain animals undergo in passing from one stage of existence to another, the chrysalis state, for instance; but a violence done to nature, a forcible disruption of its frame, against which nature struggles. A similar inference may be drawn from its *universality*. “It is appointed unto all men once to die.” However various in qualities and in course of life, all come to this common fate at last. There is a general proscription which this destroyer enforces against every living being of the fallen family of Adam, as well as against all the living creatures which connect with man on earth. “The earth is accursed for thy sake,” saith God to Adam. Does not this furnish daily and hourly evidence of the resting of the condemnatory sentence of the law on human nature? The exception in favour of those who are delivered from

condemnation, does not hold to the extent of an exemption from natural death in the present world, any more than their deliverance from the ascendancy of sin, carries their entire exemption from its existence in them. While here, sin has a place in them ; and so death, its inseparable attendant, rests upon them ; but, as we shall afterwards see, its *sting* is taken away.

2d, Ample proof may be derived from the *history of man* in every past age, and the general aspect of the world in the present.

This opens up before us on the great scale, one vast manifestation of the mingled workings of selfish, flagitious, and ungodly principles. We behold a “ world lying in wickedness,” and pervaded with misery. Are men then free ? or are they in bondage to what so manifestly subjugates the race in every age, and in every place ?

The experience of the saints without one single exception, wherever it has been expressed or recorded, as it has been in many thousand instances, carries an uniform and decided testimony to the existence of just such a bondage as we have de-

scribed. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death *?" is the language of Paul; also, "I am carnal, sold under sin." "Iniquities prevail against me," is the declaration of David.

The want of consciousness of such bondage in others, in no degree invalidates the proof. Extreme cases of bodily disease, by affecting the mind, destroy the consciousness of disease. Equally does the spiritual blindness which characterises fallen man, and the morbid state of his moral feelings and principles, disqualify his mind from perceiving and being conscious of his state. "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption †." It may be laid down as an indubitable truth, that where there is no consciousness of bondage, there the enthrallment of the soul is as yet unbroken and entire.

III. Let the *evil* of this state of bondage be steadily viewed and considered.

* Rom. vii. 24; Psa. lxxv. 3.

† 2 Pet. ii. 19.

You must have observed, that it is an *inward spiritual* bondage affecting the moral powers and liberties of the soul, and assigning the soul over to a prison-house and a cruel avenger's power for ever more.

The calamity does not obtrude itself upon the world, like the spectacle of a *fettered body* enslaved to a cruel tyrant, so as to rouse the indignation, and call forth the efforts, of the generous in the cause of enslaved and insulted human nature, to bid it to be free; no, before the world are seen certain badges of religious freedom,—certain outward Christian decorations belonging to the freemen of Christ,—his baptism,—his profession of faith,—his Church's outward privileges; but O! how little is it perceived, that too often all these badges are worn by the most abject slaves of sin and Satan, and may descend with them to hell!

Is it no evil that the soul of man, formed in the image of God and capable of enjoying him, should, by the very eternity of its existence, be the most wretched and pitiable thing in its bond-

age of all that occupies earth? Arrested in its progress to the exalted heights it might have assumed in perfection and happiness; having no price to offer for its ransom; no power, so enamoured is it with its chains, ever truly to desire to be free?

Is it no evil that God should have lost his place in the human heart, that the field of his excellencies should be unexplored, his authority not recognised, his generous love not responded to, by the spiritual powers of his own offspring created for such purposes; but that these high powers should be in servile subjection to a malignant and ungenerous enemy?

Is it a light thing that the rights of God should be thus alienated, and his honour tarnished?—Would that men would consider the awful calamity which rests on the unseen but most important part of human nature. Would that men would pity that soul which is destined to live for ever, though it be in bondage!—would that men would think of that blessed God who is offended and dishonoured by their bondage!

SERMON II.

ON THE DELIVERANCE WHEREWITH CHRIST MAKETH
FREE—ATONEMENT CONSIDERED.

JOHN viii. 36.—If the Son, 'therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

THE freedom of those enslaved to sin is effected by Christ the Son of God, the only name under heaven given among men whereby we may be saved. It is not by any volition or effort as by us, but by volition and agency on His part, that we are delivered : “ It is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy :*”—“ not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us†.” There is no inherent right or claim on our part ; our lives are forfeited to the law by sin.

* Rom. ix.

† Tit. iii. 5.

As God the glorious agent is entirely independent, therefore he claims, and we must concede, an unfettered sovereignty in his bestowment of liberty. This sovereignty extends not to the purpose only, but to the time, the means, the circumstances, the degree, the felt comfort of this deliverance. He makes men free, not on *their* plan, but on his own.

We shall now more particularly consider the nature of the deliverance wherewith Christ maketh free, and the method in which it is effected.

This great deliverance is accomplished by *atonement* removing condemnation.

The first intimation to fallen Adam of a Deliverer of the seed of the woman, signified, in the expression “He shall *bruise* his heel,” something to be *suffered* by the deliverer in effecting the rescue of man. The immediately following institution of sacrifice pointed out the same thing by an expressive symbol. The worshippers, in approaching God in order to be accepted, and heard, and blessed, sacrificed a victim. Thus did Adam, before animals were allowed as food ;

and Abel and Noah, and Abraham and the Patriarchs, and Job. There was a shedding of *blood* wherein was the *life*, an inflicting of death in the sight of God, before the worshipper could be accepted. The full meaning and intent of this divinely instituted symbol is brought out in the ampler intimations of the Mosaic economy; wherein sacrifice, with its attendant ceremonies, formed the most prominent, frequent, and indispensable of its figurative rites. There sacrifice is called a *sin-offering*, a sacrifice for *atonement*. The Israelite who has committed sin is directed (Leviticus ch. i.), to take a victim from the herd, or from the flock, to bring it to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle; to put his hand upon its head, and it is added, “it shall be accepted *for him* to make *atonement for him*.” All this was typical of Christ, and intended to be set aside when the real sacrifice of atonement should appear: “sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: then said I, Lo I come*.” Christ then came to suffer and make an atonement for sin, by pouring out his

* Psa. xl. 6.

own blood, or laying down his own life instead of the sinner, to be accepted *for him*, and make *atonement* for him.

The substitution of the deliverer instead of the sinner is most fully intimated in the *predictions*, as well as the symbols, of the Old Testament. We need quote but the striking and conclusive passages: “ Surely he hath *borne our griefs*, and carried our sorrows ; he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ; for the transgression of my people was he stricken* ;” and, “ When thou shalt make *his soul* an *offering for sin*, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand†.”

The announcement of Christ by his forerunner John the Baptist is in the words, “ Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world ;” conveying to the Jews most intelligibly this meaning :—This is he who was prefigured by the paschal lamb, by all the offerings for sin under your law, and especially by the lambs daily

* Isa. liii. 4, 8.

† Isa. liii. 10.

slain in the Temple for morning and evening sacrifice: This is the true sacrifice for atonement by which the sins of the world are taken away.

Christ himself was equally explicit not only in declaring that he must suffer and die, but that his life was to be laid down as a *ransom*: That he, “the good shepherd, should lay down his life for the sheep*.”

After the event of Christ’s death, which, in whatever way we interpret it, is a *fact*, his apostles uniformly and every where preached this gospel, that “Christ died *for our sins* according to the Scriptures†;” for *our sins*, by atoning for them, and thereby removing them. Otherwise, or in any other sense, it would not be a gospel or glad tidings; and this atonement was in accordance with a design of God, intimated in all the prefigurings and pre-intimations of Scripture from the beginning of time. It were vain to attempt to shew by quotation that Christ’s death is held out as a proper atonement for our sins in the apostolical writings; for, besides numberless direct

* John x. 11.

† 1 Cor. xv. 3.

passages, the idea of atonement is so inwrought into all their statements, so made the basis of their system, that the difficulty is not to find where it is, but rather where it is not. I may, however, adduce the following passages with a slight comment. "But Christ being come, an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God*?" Christ being come, not under a temporary and figurative, but under a final and substantial, economy for human deliverance, procured not by the blood of bestial sacrifices, but by *his*

Heb. ix. 11—14.

own blood, “ eternal redemption for us.” And could it be otherwise? or how could the conscience fail of having its fears removed, seeing that “ he through the Eternal *Spirit* offered *himself* without *spot* unto God.” The Eternal Spirit being concurrent in the offering of the sacrifice, shews it to have been of divine appointment, and consequently suitable and sufficient in the sight of God; and the expression *himself without spot*, distinctly intimated that there was in his intrinsic greatness and spotless purity what necessarily gave worth and efficacy to the sacrifice as viewed in itself.

In the same epistle it is declared, that “ This man Christ, after he had offered *one* sacrifice for sins, *for ever* sat down on the right hand of God;” intimating that, so complete was the atoning efficacy of the *One* sacrifice, that he needed no more *for ever* to engage in that work. And still more explicitly is it declared in verse 14, that “ by *One offering* he perfected *for ever* them that are sanctified.” In token of which eternal exemption from the charge of sin, the language of God’s

covenant promise is adduced, " Their sins and iniquities will I remember NO MORE."

But it has been said, that condemnation is the curse of the law which we violated ; and does it appear, when Christ is said to be a *sin-offering* or *atonement* for sins in his death, that it was the *actual* curse and *penalty* belonging to us, and the *whole* penalty, which he endured ? " God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, *made under* the law, to redeem them who were under the law *." Thus was He who, as the Son of God, was above the law, made under it or subjected to it, for the purpose of redeeming those who were liable to its penalty.

The charge of sin was made to rest on him as the surety or representative that he might bear the penalty : " God *made* him to be *sin* for us, though in himself he knew no sin †." In this situation he is said actually to have endured the penalty. " As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse ‡ ;" that is, all of us who are under obligation to do the works of the law, by having

* Gal. iv. 4. † 2 Cor. v. 21. ‡ Gal. iii. 10.

failed, are under the curse; but “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a *curse for us*.” It was by actually enduring the curse himself, and in no other way and by no other mode of compensating the law, that he redeemed us.

The apostle, writing to the Romans, states, that “our old man*” (meaning thereby our sinful nature) “was crucified with Christ;” or, in other words, the crucifixion of Christ was in legal effect the same as if our sinful souls had been subjected to the penalty of death.

That the law *exhausted* its demand or right of penalty in the death of Christ our surety, is clearly reasoned by Paul (Rom. vii.), when, from the marriage compact, in which the death of the husband releases the wife, he illustrates the breaking finally of the bond by which the law holds us amenable to penalty, by the death of Christ: “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become *dead* to the law by the body of Christ.” The final enforcement of every law is the penalty;

* Rom. vi. 6.

then its jurisdiction and power cease, it becomes dead. So, when Christ died, bearing the penalty for his people, the law of God became dead as to its right of inflicting penalty: And farther on he states the same thing in the converse form, "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held." Surely, then, the *whole penalty* is removed when we are dead to the law, and the law dead to us as respects penalty.

Agreeing with this in the fullest manner, is the language of the same Apostle in the following chapter: "There is, therefore, now *no condemnation* to them who are in Christ Jesus." Therefore in the death of the children of God in the present world, there is nothing penal. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

In his epistle to the Thessalonians, the Apostle says of them that are dead in the Lord, that they "*are asleep*, and should not be sorrowed for as

* 1 Cor. xv. 55.

those who have no hope." "Them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." It is a sleep which brings no harm, but gives refreshment ; a short night for repose, to be succeeded by the joyful morning of an eternal day !

Christ himself arose from the dead, in token that the work of redemption from death was completed ; but as he died not for himself, so neither did he rise for himself. In rising he became the "*first fruits* of them that slept," and others whom he represented shall be "made alive, every man in his own order ; Christ the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming, when the harvest of the earth shall be reaped." Were it not for this removal from the body of the effect of the suspension of its powers, and the dissolution of its elements by natural death, the removal of the curse would be incomplete. We find the Deliverer intimating his purpose in the prophetic language of Hosea : " I will ransom them from the power of the grave ; I will redeem them from death. O death ! I will be thy plagues ; O grave ! I will be thy destruction." The time of the re-

surrection is ever, in Scripture, represented as glorious and joyful; as the emancipating of a prisoner whose sentence of release is now executed, whose jubilee trumpet is now sounded. “The creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”* “We ourselves groan, waiting for the redemption of the body.”

Again, atonement, by taking away the curse, removes the *ground of accusation* which begets the secret terror of the soul, and is the source of the guilty conscience which entails a moral bondage on the spirit; and this it does in the only effectual way, by referring the mind to God, and to a judicial act of his government, for relief. “Through death,” (his own death), “Christ delivers them who, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage:”† and again, “How much more shall the blood of Christ who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”

* Rom. viii. 21. 23.

† Heb. ii. 15.

The full amount of this relief can only be estimated by those in whom the terrors of a guilty conscience have wrought their baneful effects. They, too, can best perceive the use of that palpable and perpetual memorial of atonement which God in his wisdom and grace has instituted in the ordinance of the Supper, which “shews the Lord’s death until he come.”

The last of the benefits involved in the act of atonement which shall here be mentioned, is the *destruction of the rights* of Satan as avenger. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he (Christ) also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”* There is something inexpressibly awful in the scripture intimations respecting this enemy. We have already seen how he made the conquest of this world, and how it was legalized to him by the curse. Ruling in it, and influencing it by sin, he became, in that respect, the god of this world; but here he is said

* Heb. ii. 14.

to have the *power* of death, meaning not the disposal of the time and manner, which belongs to the judge and the law, but the power of the *infliction* or *execution*, which is the part of the avenger, and a fit office for a malignant spirit. Wherever the death is penal he has the power, or acts in the capacity, of an avenger. Even in the death of Christ, which was penal, Satan acted as avenger, “Thou shall bruise his heel;” but in this event, Christ bruized his head, by destroying his right of ascendancy: “He, *by death*, destroyed him that had the power of death.” The extinction of penalty in the death of Christ, destroyed the office of avenger. Christ, while contemplating the effect of his death on Satan’s power, thus speaks: “Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.”* And the Apostle, as if explaining the Saviour’s meaning, in his Epistle to the Colossians, says, “Having spoiled principalities and powers, he (Christ) made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it” † (his cross). But how, by this act of seeming weakness, did he triumph, and

* Col. ii. 15.

† John xii. 31.

of what could it despoil these powers? Was this world, in that hour and power of darkness when the Saviour died, less dark, less sinful than before? Were many of those who beheld the event and wagged their heads, and scorned the dying agony of the sufferer, less wicked and less like Satan than other men? Oh, no; but this crucifixion, all humble and sorrowful in its aspect, and all unheeded as it was by the benighted world in which it took place, was the act which legally transferred the rights of moral occupancy and destiny in this world from the hands of a cruel destroyer, to those of a gracious Saviour. Thus, in law, he triumphed, and in breaking the spell of human bondage, he despoiled principalities and powers.

Finally, the removal of the curse by atonement, was a *prerequisite* to all the other deliverances needed by fallen man. The atonement unfettered the Divine benevolence from the restraints of justice; so that there was no let or hinderance to the use of any agency, or to the granting of any privilege which God might choose to bestow for

man's benefit. The whole extent of Christian privilege is legalised by atonement,—“ the enmity was slain.” Following thereon, God, in consideration of the atonement made by his Son, did covenant and agree with him his chosen, and had it inscribed in the imperishable record of his word, “ That when his soul should be made an offering for sin, he should see his seed, he should prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands*.” If he was the second Adam to fulfil a broken law, it was seen right that he should also be a quickening Spirit in this world, the spiritual head of a new race. “ God gave us eternal life in his Son.” This covenant often alluded to, and very specifically mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. viii. verse 10, promises the writing of God's law on the heart, and many other spiritual blessings; but in allusion to the necessary preparative of atonement in removing sin, God says, “ *For*, I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins will I remember no more.” In Hebrews chap.

* Isa. liii. 10.

ix. verse 15. the Apostle says, “ For this cause he (Christ) is the mediator of the new Covenant, that by *means of death*, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first *Covenant*, they which are called might *receive the promise of eternal inheritance*.” To the same effect, Hebrews, chap. ii. verse 10, “ It *became him*, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in *bringing many sons unto glory*, to make the Captain of their salvation *perfect* through sufferings.”

God did not only make it legal or allowable to bestow other benefits, not exactly included in the exemptions belonging to atonement ; but did, as a thing *befitting* him, on atonement being rendered, covenant and promise to bestow these other benefits. The atoning blood of Christ became the blood of God's covenant in this sense, “ This is my *blood of the new covenant*.” The whole extent of the subsequent privilege of men who shall be saved, is included in this covenant of promise ratified by and founded in atonement. God therein promises them through Christ, that he shall

make them morally as well as legally free; that he shall secure them here, and give them a heavenly home, and an everlasting happiness hereafter.

How great, then, in every view we take of it, is the death of Christ to work human freedom; and how fully does it furnish us with the measure of that vast benevolence, by the impulse of which all other blessings are poured upon us! “He that spared not his own Son, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

SERMON III.

ON THE DELIVERANCE WHEREWITH CHRIST MAKETH
FREE—EFFICIENCY OF CHRIST RISEN CONSIDERED.

JOHN viii. 36.—If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye
shall be free indeed.

IT IS A DELIVERANCE FROM THE ASCENDENCY
OF SIN AND SATAN, AND FROM THE DEPRESSING
EFFECTS OF HUMAN INFIRMITY, BY THE ENER-
GIES OF A RISEN AND GLORIFIED SAVIOUR.
The first part of the work of the Son of God
was complete in laying a *foundation* for all the
relief required by a lost world, as we have en-
deavoured to shew. But to build thereon, re-
quired the energies of a living Saviour. The re-
surrection of Christ is in Scripture uniformly re-
presented as next in importance to his death, and
also essential to our salvation. “ If Christ be

not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain *.” For besides that there could be no evidence of the efficacy and full reception of atonement, without the release of the surety from the hand of death, there would be wanting, without the resurrection and ascension of the great representative of man, one who should plead out the benefits secured, and apply them to blind unconscious man, who of himself would never seek them. It is said of Christ, that “ he was delivered for our offences, and *raised again for our justification* †;” that is, for pleading out and procuring an act of justification in our favour, as well as for applying the peace of it to our minds. It is in this department that the High Priesthood of Christ, on which the New Testament Scriptures lay so much stress, is available. “ By his own blood he *entered* in once into the holy place, having *obtained* eternal redemption for us ‡.” The very circumstance of the perpetuity of this priesthood is represented as having a securing influence on our salvation : “ But this man, because he con-

* 1 Cor. xv. 14.

† Rom. iv. 25.

‡ Heb. ix. 12.

tinueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able to save them to the *uttermost* that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them *.” He is necessarily a Mediator between the infinitely exalted and holy God, and us sinful creatures; and our acceptance with God, and freedom in coming to his presence, may be said entirely to depend on this exalted mediation, adapted as it is so admirably to the relative circumstances of the two parties to be united. “ Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession ;” and again, “ He being touched with our infirmities, let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace†.”

Christ arose and ascended to heaven to occupy the mediatorial throne. This was predicted in the Old Testament Scriptures. In anticipation, God says, Psa. ii. “ I have set my king on my holy hill of Zion.” The prediction of Isaiah is in these words: “ Unto us a child is born, unto

* Heb. vii. 24, 25.

† Heb. iv. 14.

us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace; of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end *."

When in the world Christ himself declared, "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth;" and again he speaks of having received "power over all flesh to give eternal life." And his apostles affirm in striking language the same exaltation to power over all: "God raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come †." There are several other passages to the same effect.

What, then, do we here behold? an enthronement for the deliverance of man, of the Omnipotent, Omnipresent, all pervading Jehovah, who

* Isa. ix. 6.

† Eph. i. 22.

embraces and controls all the vast universe, with all the elements, and all the minds that occupy the spaces of creation ; yea, and all these mighty powers swayed to this work of making free, by the same love that brought him to the agonies of death for man ; say, “ Is there any thing too hard for (this) Lord ? ”

But it is a peculiar feature of this administration, as befitting perhaps its high character, that there is an intermediate agency of the Spirit of God between the head of the government, and the subjects on which its power is to be exerted, and perhaps also because the employment of the Divine Spirit in such a work is a perpetual evidence of the concurrence of Deity in all the stages of human deliverance : it shews that “ all things are of God ” essentially considered, whatever may be the peculiar character of the dispensation under which he accomplishes them. Of this there is no doubt, that the expediency of the Spirit's mission is most distinctly asserted by Christ himself : “ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth ; it is

expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come *."

The prediction of Christ's ascension and glory, in the 68th Psalm, " He hath ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and hath obtained gifts for men, even the rebellious, that *God* the *Lord* should *dwell* among them," seems to be an intimation that the Spirit obtained by the risen and glorified Saviour should be sent to dwell with men. The apostle Peter is quite explicit on this point, in explaining to the Jews the cause of the appearances on the day of Pentecost : " Therefore (Christ) being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the *promise of the Holy Ghost*, he hath shed forth that which ye now see and hear †."

To the Spirit as the agent, the New Testament Scriptures distinctly attribute the work of man's deliverance from the dominion of sin and Satan. " For the *law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus* hath made *me free* from the law of sin and of death ‡ ;" in other words, Paul affirms that the

* John xvi. 7.

† Acts ii. 33.

‡ Rom. viii. 2.

dispensation of grace in which the Spirit of life in Christ is given, hath, by its operation, directed to himself, made him free, both from sin and its penalty, death, to which he was subject, under the former legal constitution. He declares that “where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty *,” and that “if we through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live †.”

Nor is there any thing inconsistent with the analogy of God’s works in supposing the Spirit of God to be the agent in imparting spiritual life; or, in other words, in giving a totally new, unwonted, and heavenly direction to the affections and desires of human nature.

The circumstance of this agent not being discernible by us at the point of contact with the human attributes which he influences, is no proof that such contact does not take place. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and we know not whence it cometh or whither it goeth.” When we endeavour in any thing to trace the vital principle, or bring spiritual causation under our

* 2 Cor. iii. 17.

† Rom. viii. 13.

cognizance, we utterly fail, and yet we make no doubt of their existence and operation from the effects.

There are certain great principles to be regarded, which limit and regulate the agency of the Spirit.

Thus the Spirit is never to be regarded either as a new element of power operating indefinitely, or as a person promoting a separate interest of his own; “for he shall not speak of *himself*, but whatsoever he shall *hear* that shall he speak*,” but as a moral instructor and comforter, to develope to us the character, to impress on us the mind and feeling, and to communicate the instructions of Him under whose government, and for whose purposes and glory he acts. “He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shew it unto you†.” He operates entirely within the rules and for the purposes of the dispensation of grace. In all this the Spirit of God never loses his divine character, but is the unchangeably wise, and holy, and true God. How absurd and wicked, then, to

* John xvi. 13.

† John xvi. 14.

attribute to him imaginations and impressions of infatuated men, which are as far removed from the rules of the dispensation of grace as they are foreign from the decisions of a sound understanding.

The Spirit, whatever secret powers of enforcement he may have, must, like every moral instructor, present to the mind appropriate materials for persuasion, not baseless imaginations, but substantial and authenticated truth : hence the word of God is called “ The sword of the Spirit,” and the Saviour, praying for the sanctifying of his disciples says, “ Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth.” The main endeavour of the Spirit is to bring the word of God home upon the mind, with conviction of its truth, reality and importance ; and thereby, agreeably to the rules of moral enforcement, he turns man to God.

The truth may be brought to bear, not only by direct means of inculcation, but indirectly through being exhibited in the spirit and in the lives of those who know it, or by providential dispensations concurring to lead the mind to known

but unheeded conclusions of the truth. Such is the indefinable variety of states of mind and of external circumstances in different individuals, that the mode of treatment in bringing them to conviction and impressing their hearts must be indefinitely varied. Yet all savingly impressed minds have this in common, that theirs is an impression of the truth, in its true Scripture meaning,—the Spirit who indited these Scriptures must be consistent with himself.

In exhibiting the sinful state of the human heart, the love of gratifying self was represented as the ground-work of sinfulness in man, and that which, while it remained ascendant, necessarily involved enmity to God, who demands that we *should love him* with all our hearts. Now, if the Spirit, in presenting the materials of moral suasion, does not exhibit and enforce what, by bringing the love of God to be ascendant, subjugates the great principle of self, man remains essentially the same enemy to God as ever in his heart; and all his convictions of religious truths without this bearing, however just in themselves, fail of gaining

the stronghold of the heart to God, and of bringing out the phenomena of Christianity as the products of a new and peculiar principle, essentially opposed to that which actuates unconverted men.

The Apostle's account of the overthrow of the selfish principle is given in 2 Cor. iv. 5, "For we preach *not ourselves* but Christ Jesus our Lord; and ourselves *your servants* for *Jesus' sake*. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, *hath shined in our hearts*, to give the light of the *knowledge of the glory of God* in the *face of Jesus Christ*." Here the relinquishment of their own glory as an object in their public labours, and the existence of that entire devotedness to Christ which made them willing servants to his cause and people, are attributed to an act of God in causing the light of the *knowledge* of his *glory* to *shine* into their hearts.

The *glory* of God is the excellency of his character. The *peculiar glory* that is exhibited in Christ, (in the face of Christ, or in the whole aspect of the Christian dispensation), is that of God's moral attributes, his truth, and rectitude,

and holiness, but especially his love, which is the moving spring of all. These combined, constitute the peculiar excellency of the Divine character. And this is the character which is brought out in glorious exhibition, and with demonstrative evidence in the economy of redemption. And when God, by his Spirit, (the Spirit that in the natural creation moved on the face of the deep, and at God's command caused that there should be light), causes the shining in true conviction of the knowledge of this true character of God in the heart, then is the love of God formed, and the selfish principle cast down from the ascendant. And still more explicitly, if possible, in another passage in the same epistle, the Apostle represents the changing of man's character into the image of the generous, benevolent, and holy character of God, as produced by the very same manifestation of God's glory brought to bear effectually by the Spirit of God. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the *glory of the Lord*, are *changed* into the *same image* from *glory to glo-*

ry even as by the *Spirit of the Lord*.”* The appropriate moral cause by which the soul is swayed to love God and submit to him in love; and which the Spirit presents in a true and affecting light before the mind, is the character of God, especially his amazing and free love in redemption. This love, viewed not in the abstract as a matter of speculation, but in its favourable aspect on ourselves, “as made to shine *in our hearts*,” is what determines the disposition of the heart towards God, and draws the whole soul to him in admiration and love. And the immense debt of obligation conferred by the gift of the glorious Redeemer, and by the appointment and the rendering of his sacrifice painful to him, but incalculably valuable to us, calls for a love of gratitude which, blending with our high admiration of the Divine character, powerfully constrains the soul. “The love of God constraineth us, and we live not unto *ourselves*, but unto him who died for us and rose again.” “We love him because

* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

he first loved us.” It may not be difficult, we allow, for some self-complacent minds to persuade themselves that God loves them on a principle of favouritism. But that the love of God in his own children is the product of glory exhibited in him rather than of self-partiality operating in them, is seen in the ever-attending feeling of reverential fear in their minds. Viewing the moral grandeur of the Divine character constituted by the combination of moral attributes which appears in the work of human redemption, they admire and they love, but *they must also fear*, and submit, and not trifle with the Majesty of the Most High.

Thus does the risen, glorified, and enthroned Saviour, by the agency of his Spirit, and the instrumentality of his truth, operate on the heart of man to cast down sin from the ascendant there. He establishes a new principle of action, “a new heart—a new creature—a new man.” Within, and by a continuous application of the same means and agency to his people, whom he holds in adherence to him by faith, he perfects the work he hath begun, shewing, according to the Scriptures,

that “He is made of God unto us, not only our righteousness, but also our wisdom and our *sanc-tification* ;” shewing, “That having redeemed his own from all iniquity, he *purifies them* to himself, a peculiar people, *zealous of good works*.”

Satan, though divested of his rights, as we have seen, ceases not to be an assailant whilst men occupy the sinful territory, and carry the remnants of sin within them. Against his efforts, the powers of Messiah’s government are directed. This was predicted: “Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.” *

Christ was “manifested to destroy the works of the devil,” as we read in the New Testament. This is a moral contest between the powers of truth and error, as exemplified in Christ’s temptation set forth in Matthew’s Gospel, 4th chapter,

* Isaiah, xlix. 24.

1st verse. Satan's strongholds in the heart of man are to be pulled down by the "weapons of a spiritual warfare that are powerful through God." Thus the original invasion of Satan is returned upon him; for as he conquered this world by his insidious misrepresentations to our first parents, Christ reconquers it by his grace and truth working in the hearts of their descendants. It is said that he will "bruise Satan under *our feet*," (observe, not under his own, for that were easy), and that "*we* shall be more than conquerors through him that loved us." Yes, so efficient are the powers of truth brought home by the Spirit, that the devices of error have no standing before them. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

There is no success in this contest but by being *strong* in the Lord and wielding truth, by being ever near to, and dependent on, the Captain of our Salvation,—by being girt with the whole armour of truth, with which he furnishes us: especially, we must have a true and extensive knowledge of the word, that the suitable sword may be ever

ready, and a firm faith which will authenticate and give it force, so that the heart may be protected against the fallacious plausibilities of error.

There is just one other species of deliverance effected by the Son of God, which shall be briefly noticed: *Freedom from the depressing effects of human infirmity.*

This liability was not noticed in our account of human bondage, because it would seem trivial to make much account of the short-lived woes of the passing scene, when exhibiting man subject to a penalty which would eternally exclude him from God and happiness, and the victim of a depravity which laid him, with all his powers, prostrate at the feet of a malignant enemy.

But when we view man as the subject of a glorious deliverance, which rescues him from eternal ills, we may suitably enough inquire what relief he has from the sorrows and sufferings of the present world.

The Son of God, our Saviour, is said to be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; in all our afflictions to be afflicted. He promises to

“ make all things work together for good to them that love him,” and to hear us “ when we cry unto him in trouble ;” and directs us to “ cast all our cares on him, for he careth for us.” From this account of the sympathy of his heart, and of his intention and promise to relieve, joined to our knowledge of his extensive power, we may assure ourselves that whatever infirmities, or sorrows, may be in our lot, they will neither overwhelm nor injure us. Bereavements may occur, but the Lord will more than supply their place. The terrors of the valley of death are soothed by his comforts ; its darkness lighted by his presence ; “ My rod and my staff they comfort thee.” Is the soul shuddering on the verge of a vast unknown eternity, without chart or skill to guide it o’er that trackless sea ? The Lord appears, and says, “ Fear not, I am with thee, I have the keys of hell and of death ; I come to take you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also.”

SERMON IV.

ON THE MODE OF SECURING A PERSONAL INTEREST IN THE DELIVERANCE.

JOHN viii. 36.—If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

ON what depends our personal interest in the deliverance wherewith Christ maketh free?

It may have been observed from what has been already stated, that the Son of God, the deliverer, wrought out all the legal grounds of relief, and that there is no legal or *meritorious* condition required of us; and also, that he possesses and wields all the powers of an efficient causation in applying the moral means of deliverance, so that it is not left to depend on any peculiar powers for effort, or on any particular constitutional facility

on our part. The worst as well as the best may equally be delivered by such mighty agency.

God's design of bestowing the salvation gratuitously ("salvation is of grace not of debt") for the honour of his own benevolence, precludes the attainment of it from being rested on the issue of human merit or effort: "no flesh must glory" (in this respect) "in his presence."* Besides, the magnitude of the obstacles to be removed, and the transcendent value of the benefits to be conferred, are such as to make the attainment infinitely disproportionate to any human merit: And such is the depth of human depravity, the radical heart-alienation from God, that to throw the issue on the contingency of that heart's turning to God, or on the precarious efforts of its deceitful purpose, would be to frustrate salvation entirely.

Still man is God's intelligent offspring, and a responsible moral agent; and God will deal with him suitably to that intelligent nature and moral responsibility. He will not apply salvation to

* 1 Cor. i. 29.

him passively, but will require the concurrence of man's understanding and the consent of his will, to that peculiar mode of salvation which he proposes.

The difficulty here is to retain the whole merit and efficiency to Christ, and at the same time give place on the part of man to that penetration pertaining to an intelligent, and that choice belonging to a responsible, agent.

This, we think, God has wonderfully done, by making his scheme the matter of a *testimony* from himself, duly authenticated and recorded in the inspired word, and by authorising a *promulgation or proposal* of this scheme in terms of that word to man, in the ministry of reconciliation. In this way God lays it before his intelligent creatures as a thing to be believed by them, and demands an expression of their belief of what he has submitted. He virtually, as well as expressly, calls on all men to believe ; and he has made this belief in them the medium of connection with the glorious freedom he announces. “ By *faith* ye are *saved*.” “ *Believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ,

and thou shalt be *saved*,"* "whosoever *believeth* on him shall not perish, but have *everlasting life*."†

Now, the belief of any thing duly attested is an act of the mind which adds no moral merit to its possessor, nor takes any from the Author of the wonderful scheme which is believed. Whatever there may be of moral feeling or bias influencing the mind when belief or unbelief acts, there is nothing moral in the *act* of believing itself, more than in the act of vision.

Yet this act of believing such *deeply interesting* truths as God testifies in the Gospel; necessarily carries with it, and in the case of saving faith must necessarily do so, the instant concurrence of the mind to our being saved by that scheme; not that we assert that a man necessarily concurs with every thing he believes, but that there are certain things of so momentous a nature, that while man retains his rationality and desire of self-preservation or happiness, the belief of them, and the acting on his belief, are inevitably associated. Thus

* Acts xvi. 31.

† John iii. 16.

one informs us that our habitation is on fire all around us, and there is but one opening for escape which he recommends ; if we believe him, is not the instant effort to escape necessarily dependent on faith ? God, by throwing our salvation on the issue of faith, proposes no moral condition, so that in acceding to it we “ might have whereof to glory ;” while by that very simple act of believing, owing to the glorious nature of the objects which it brings in contact with the mind, he ensures moral consequences of immense value. It cannot be denied by the reflecting mind, that there is an adaptation to the rational responsible character of man in making faith the medium of our salvation ; a consistency also with the weakness of man who, in his fallen state, is incapable of fulfilling a moral condition ;—and a suitableness to the gracious nature of God’s bestowment. “ It is of *faith* that it might be by *grace*.” *

* That the testimony of God is presented to the mind of man, as it behoved to be to a rational creature, for the exercise of that creature’s penetration and choice in order that he may believe, is true ; and it is also true, that the evidence of the truth of the testimony is so ample and obvious, as to

But passing from the idea of a scheme of deliverance to that of a *Deliverer*, testified of and

demand credence, not merely where the power of discernment is great, but from every man, so universally legible is this exposé of divine truth, that "he who runneth may read." Nay more, the benefit proposed in the testimony is so needful and so great, as might be expected at once to conciliate human regard, and to ensure the amplest consideration of which man is capable to the proposal; hence man as a rational creature though morally fallen, is without excuse, nay is deeply culpable, in the sight of God, if he fails to believe; unbelief is the greatest of sins. Still, on the other hand, so adverse is man, by reason of the evil moral bias of his heart to the purity of the divine character; so mistrustful of all terms proposed by him, and so distasteful also to his depraved feeling, and so opposed to his previous conceptions, is the whole scheme proposed, that he will not give his attention to the testimony, nor weigh its evidence with unbiased mind, and the matter issues in what Christ charges on the Jews of his day, "Ye *will* not come to me that ye might have life." From these causes, it is found, in fact, that the belief of man is not gained, man's own moral waywardness interposing an effectual bar. Hence in all cases where faith exists in man, it is *of the operation of God*; "It is the gift of God," so that to the fullest extent, it is true that our salvation is of God. Were we to admit what some seem to suppose, that there are cases wherein faith in the testimony exists without willingness to accede to the plan believed, we should have the anomaly of a man believing and being justified by faith, without being morally turned to God; whereas, by supposing the mind acted upon by the Spirit of God, not after believing towards consent,

proposed to us by God in his Gospel, “ If the *Son* shall make you free ;” it is evident that his sacrifice or atoning work must owe any efficacy it has to benefit us to its being vicarious, or done in the character of a representative or surety ; and in the same way, any special and assured bearing on us of his privileges and powers as a risen Saviour, must depend on that representative character continuing throughout. Now, unless we give in to the monstrous idea, that there is that general relation between the Son of God as representative and all mankind, which ensures universal salvation irrespective of knowledge or choice on the part of man ; we are forced to believe that there is *something* required to *constitute the tie* between us and the representative, so as that we should come into a relation with God as represented in Christ—a rela-

but before it towards consideration, consent and belief, the influence on the will being antecedent, we have faith from the first moment of its existence, operating equally to the effect of legally justifying the soul, and of morally causing it to choose the Lord and his service. That this is the view of the eminent framers of the reformed creed is evident from the question in the Shorter Catechism, *on Effectual Calling*.

tion totally new, and different from that which the world in general has with God. *This something is faith.* “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”

The Gospel is called God’s testimony concerning his Son, and saving faith is the belief of this testimony,—a belief *involving in it*, on a principle already laid down, that the person believing (persuaded of awful danger, persuaded also that Christ is “the only name under heaven given among men whereby he may be saved,” the only opening of escape) *clings to, and trusts in*, this Christ the Son of God as *his deliverer*. This faith, on its public avowal, is sealed or attested by the ordinance of baptism; and baptism is, in Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, spoken of as indicating the union with Christ, “As many as have been baptised unto Christ have *put on Christ*.* And the same Apostle, speaking of the union of faith indicated by baptism, shews that it operates to the effect of interesting us in Christ’s death, and in his resur-

* Ch. iii. ver. 27.

rection, and in the benefits arising from them as our representative *.

The term *being in Christ*, which is the usual New Testament mode of expressing the believer's union with Christ, shews an intimate relation, tantamount to the representative and the represented being *one* in the view of God and the law; and this union is illustrated by the similitudes of a tree and its branches—a body with the members associated to the head—a house on its foundation.

Faith, then, saves us not by any virtue in itself, either moral or intellectual, but as being the medium of our union with Christ the Son of God,

* It is not to be held, because we have spoken of baptism as the seal of faith, or its indication, that we mean to say, that all baptised persons are believers united to Christ, and interested in his spiritual benefits. The outward baptism is the act of man : he may give it where faith, however distinctly avowed, does not exist; consequently baptism administered where faith exists not, is like adhibiting a seal to a blank instrument, it conveys nothing. The seal, good enough in itself, carries nothing, because the document to which it is appended is not executed. The Apostle regarded baptism as the outward and apparent badge of faith, the token that the possessor of it had avowed belief in Christ; and therefore, under the term baptism he treats of faith and the union it constitutes with Christ, and the benefits it confers.

our representative, who by himself wrought out, and does work, the whole of our salvation: "Christ is all."

Enough perhaps has been said to shew that *faith in God's gospel testimony* involving in it our acceding to God's plan, and accepting of God's anointed, is the only way in which we can come to have a personal interest in the "freedom wherewith the Son maketh free."

It remains that we now point out *the encouragements to the faith which is essential to salvation.*

The first to be mentioned, and most obvious and essential, is the *truth* of the testimony. This is not the place to state the evidences by which the Scriptures are proved to be a revelation from God: in addressing professing Christians we are warranted to hold them as confessing, "That all Scripture is given by inspiration of God;" that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This being so, we must view the Bible not as the dictate of men, but as the production of the Divine mind; the result of the

combined exercise of the infinite attributes of the Most High ;—the rich, and to our dark minds complicated, variety of its truths presenting a perfect analogy to those varied and stupendous works of nature around us, which are the products of the same divine attributes.

The dictates of this blessed book are secured from unintentional error by the infinite knowledge—the perfect prescience, and unerring wisdom of their Author ; and their truth is vouched by his unalterable truth and unfailing faithfulness, “ A God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he.”

The integrity of man is often such as to attach certainty to his word, so far as his knowledge extends ; but the integrity of the All-perfect and Most Holy God, whose undeceived and undeceiving faithfulness is the bulwark of the hopes of an universe, gives a character of entire verity to all his declarations : “ If we believe the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater.” Of the truth of what he says, there is an absolute certainty : “ Heaven and earth may pass away, but

one jot or one tittle of all he has said shall not pass away till all be accomplished." "The word of our God shall stand for ever."*

We are to receive this word, not because in some points it recommends itself to our rationality, or may be known by us to be truth on other grounds; but rather because it is the dictate—the very truth—of God, and carries his attestation. This alone can give it force in our minds, and true authority over us. The Apostle writes to the Thessalonians, "Ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."†

2d, Faith, as it involves *trust* in the Deliverer, is encouraged by considering the *graciousness* of his character. There must have been some disposition or motive as the basis of the divine purpose to save men, something impelling the wonderful procedure in which the humiliation, sufferings, and death of the Son of God, and his divine

* Isaiah xl. 8. † 2 Thess. ii. 13.

powers on the throne of univereal sovereignty, are employed. Whence this great salvation? The amazing answer is, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.” *

The love which is an essential attribute of the divine nature (“God is love”), and which possesses the infinitude and unchangeableness pertaining to all Divine properties, was by God’s own often repeated testimony, the source of this deliverance by Jesus Christ to men;—a love which, though undiscoverable in its *infinity*, is yet exhibited in vast intensity, when measured by the mighty deed done by the costly sacrifice made in Christ Jesus,—a love all vast and verified as it is directed to the *world*, yea, the *sinful world*. Its expedients and its gifts are all adapted to sinners, and to none other. Christ is declared to have come to call and to save *sinners*. Can *we*, then, who are sinners, *mistrust* a Being acting toward ourselves from such a benevolent and generous

*John iii. 15.

principle essential and self-moved in his nature? Suppose a benevolent man making the same avowal of his love, and vouching it by similar sacrifices, would you be entitled to doubt him? A benevolent man is one whom you give credit to as having pleasure in benevolent deeds. But "God delighteth in mercy;" and do you, in mistrusting, dare to deny this? or to believe that he would delight in your ruin? Hear his language: "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."*

Love, then, as beheld in God, is the warm attractive by which the heart known to the truth is drawn to choice and confidence in the Son of God.

3d, The *incalculable value* of the atonement encourages confidence of faith.

It was an atonement made by the *death of the Son of God* in human nature; "by the *precious blood of Christ*, who, through the Eternal Spirit,

* Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

offered himself without spot unto God. Will you say, that, however gracious and placable God may be, there is a peculiar enormity, a degree of aggravation in your sins, which prevents your hoping for forgiveness? But is there no regard in the estimate to be had to the countervailing of this atonement of surpassing virtue? Are you prepared, on any known principle, to decide that there is more in the *demerit* of man to condemn, than in the *righteousness of God* (the *righteousness of God* is the name given to the satisfaction to the Divine law which Christ finished in the act of dying) to relieve from condemnation.

But let us, in this matter, go to first principles. Does God punish sin from hatred or vindictive feeling to the person of the offender? has he, of whom it is said “God is love,” any such propensity to gratify? Assuredly not, “He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” * Why, then, it may be asked, is there penalty under His government? It is from the unavoidable necessity of giving *effect to the*

* 2 Peter iii. 9.

law, both for God's honour and for the happiness of his rational and responsible creatures. Penalty may be viewed as having a benevolent and not a vindictive basis. The question then resolves itself into this, In which way, by the personal punishment of the offender, or by the substitutive punishment of the Son of God, is *the law* best maintained, most highly recognised, most thoroughly proved unalterable, most firmly established before the whole universe? We hesitate not to affirm, by *the latter*. The death of the Son of God carries a demonstration in it, that the law which passed not from Him the cup of suffering, will never do it from any other except such as being united to him are under the protection of his vicarious atonement. In this way the authority of law is mightily strengthened,—and, at the same time, the confidence of reconciliation and immunity to them who return to God on the basis of Christ's atonement is mightily strengthened too.

4th, There is a further encouragement to faith

in our regarding, in connection with a Risen and Glorified Saviour, such considerations as the following :—His being engaged, by divine faithfulness, to give effect to promises to which God is pledged in covenant ;—the sympathy constituted by his participation of human nature, and his experience of human woes ;—and the official responsibility he has incurred by undertaking offices, the name of which he bears before the universe ; all these, united to Almighty power and boundless jurisdiction, in him the King of Zion. Think you, will he, in such circumstances, either neglect his people, or be deterred from prosecuting to final completion their deliverance ?—Will he, the same whose love sought them in the fires of divine wrath, relinquish them now under any combination of circumstances or inveteracy of evil on their part ; things which were all foreseen ?—Will he yield before any array of opposition from earth or hell ? No, he will not be turned from his purpose. “ He shall not fail or be discouraged, until he shall have set judgment on the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law.”

We may then safely confide in him for the future, as well as for the past, that he will carry us safely through all the remaining evils, and work all our works in us.

But will it be said, Why, with such powers on his part, is not the deliverance immediate and complete? Why not at once bring them away from the vicissitudes of earth to the “inheritance of the saints in light.” The only answer, and which should be satisfactory to every humble mind, is, that God saw it meet for his own honour, and for the enhancement of the happiness of his people, that they should pass a *life* of faith here, before entering into their rest, and for this cause, that there should be a wilderness course before they enter into their heavenly Canaan. Here they are not to have their good *palpable*, but enjoyed in the expectancy of faith. Thus Abraham, “against hope, believed in hope;” * that is, in the face of discouragements in the natural and providential aspects of things, still hoped through faith for the fulfilment of God’s promise, and more generally

* Rom. iv. 18.

the apostle affirms, “ For we are saved by hope : but hope that is seen, is not hope : for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for ? but if we hope for what we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” *

To conclude.—If the bondage of the soul is such as has been described ; if the Son of God is the only and the all-sufficient deliverer by whom we can be made free ; if it is proposed to us on the part of God, who hath given us his testimony concerning his Son, that we should *believe* in his Son, and confide in him as our deliverer, that thereby we might have a personal interest in this glorious liberty ; if it is truth, the very truth attested by God, that we are called to believe ; if God himself demands of us to believe, “ This is his commandment that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ ;” † if the encouragements to it are so strong in the aspects of the gracious character, and official qualifications of the great deliverer ;—what determination can we

* Rom. viii. 24.

† 1 John iii. 23.

come to, with safety to the soul, or with any regard to our duty to God, but that of immediately betaking ourselves to Christ the Son of God in truest faith and confidence that we may be saved?

Beware of deferring this salutary determination. Would it be rational for one sentenced to a capital punishment to delay applying to the fountain of mercy? Should one, under a mortal disease, hesitate to employ the means of cure, as if it were a slight ailment removable by the powers of his own constitution? The purpose of a moment's delay involves a preference of the disease to the remedy,—of the bondage to the liberty; it is the degraded slave saying, when the proffer is made him of being elevated to a freeman, Away with your freedom; I prefer my chains. It involves more; even, the rejection of the Son of God as our deliverer,—the most provoking to God of all human offences, and which may bring the Spiritual judgment of a dark insensible heart in all time coming. Every moment's delay defrauds God of his just right, even the warm tribute of

the heart's gratitude for his amazing love in human redemption ; for that tribute never begins to flow from the heart of man to his God, until he hath participated of the glorious liberty wherewith Christ maketh free.

SERMON V.

ON THE COURSE OF LIFE WHICH THE BELIEVER IN
CHRIST MUST PURSUE.

MATTHEW vii. 21.—Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

IN the immediately preceding discourse, where-
in it was attempted to be shewn, that faith in God's
Gospel testimony, involving our accession to God's
plan of deliverance by Christ alone, is the only
way in which we come to have a personal interest
in the freedom wherewith the Son maketh free, or
in other words, is the only way by which we enter
into the kingdom of heaven; we may be considered
to have maintained what is irreconcilable with our
Lord's declaration, in the passage now before us.

How, it may be asked, can it be said that sal-
vation is of faith that it might be by grace, and

also that we are justified by faith without the works of the law ? thus giving an exclusiveness to faith as the medium of our acceptance. How can we be justified by faith without the works of the law, if there is an actual demand made that we *do the will* of the Father in heaven as a requisite to our salvation ?

The contrariety of the two statements is only apparent, not real. The doing of the Father's will in the most extensive sense, is the being answerable or obedient to all the authoritative expressions of that will which he hath given in his word. In this large amount of demand is included *faith* in his Son. This *faith*, indeed, holds a primary place in the New Testament code. "This," saith Christ, in answer to a formal interrogation of the Jews, "is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom he hath sent." "This," saith the Apostle, "is his commandment, that we believe on the name of his Son." And so essential is faith as a part of God's requirement, that it is declared that "without faith it is impossible to please God."

Faith, then, is not a thing separate from, or opposite to the will of God, but a part, and a most important part of it, as obligatory on lost sinners.

Besides, though faith, viewed simply as an act of the human mind, may be considered as not a moral act or a work of the law, and, therefore, an appropriate medium for connecting man with a salvation which is purely of grace; yet this does not prevent that there shall be in the *state of mind* of the person exercising that act, *semi-nally*, or in their first elements, that penitential feeling,—that surrender of the soul to God,—that devoting of one's self to the Father's will, which are elsewhere spoken of as requisite in the returning sinner.

God may properly hold an enacted faith, as that alone which constitutes the tie with Christ, and may, at the same time, as a homage due to himself, and as an adaptation of the sinner to the state into which he enters, demand that men shall *repent* as well as believe, “that the wicked man forsake his way, and unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn to the Lord.”

It may not be our repentance or our good dispositions toward God and his service; that unite us to Christ; but, at the same time, it may be quite impossible, without such disposition in the *state of our minds*, in an incipient form at least, to arrive at that exercise of faith which is requisite, any more than to adapt our mental attitude to the majesty and claims of God, when approaching him.

Is it conceivable that man can believe God's truth concerning his own guilty and ruined condition, and agree to receive the intervention and righteousness of a mediator as the ground of acceptance, without that feeling and acknowledgement of guilt, which is the element of repentance?

Or can man, in believing, take refuge in the immeasurable love of a God, who, at the same moment, appears really existent in the severest aspect of unbending justice and purity, without that faltering of the rebellious principle—that breaking down of resistance—which constitute the first elements of a surrender? Or, can man, warmed in

that shelter of the divine benevolence, to which he hath betaken himself, remain hard and unloving as before?

God, then, receives the sinner who believes in Christ unto his favour, and unto an interest in all the privileges of the covenant of peace; but at that moment, he has that sinner in the very nature of things subdued at his feet; he has, in the state of his mind, the seeds of that moral accommodation to God, which is essential to all who would hold relations with him; he has in an incipient form that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." And if it should please God, by an immediately subsequent act of his providence, to remove the believer from this world, we doubt not that he would so mature, by processes of speedy operation, that moral qualification, the elements of which he had implanted in his nature, as to adapt him to that higher and purer state in which his privileges were to be mainly enjoyed.

But Christ, in the passage before us, addresses men professing faith who *continue* in this world

subsequent to their act of believing ; and his object is to warn them, that the *profession* of faith expressed in the words, “ Lord, Lord,” addressed to him as Messiah, or such other external indications of it as are mentioned in the immediately succeeding context, will avail them nothing, if they continue workers of iniquity, or are not morally conformed to the will of the Father in heaven.

We may certainly gather from the circumstance of our Lord’s thinking it necessary to give such a warning, that he perceived in human nature a tendency to substitute a profession of faith, or the display of religious forms and services, for the doing of the Father’s will. Believing as we do, that human nature has the same evil liabilities in all ages, we think it necessary to press the subject of the obligation of the believer to do the will of the Father in heaven ; and shall endeavour to fill up and conclude our view of the gospel way of salvation, by pointing out the course which the soul is bound to follow from

that important point, wherein it closed in believing with the way and will of the Father in saving sinners.

The obligation to fulfil the will of the Father in heaven, is founded in the unalterable relations of God and the creature, and is antecedent to, and independent of, all subsequent dispensations of religion. The moralists of this world, therefore, judge right in supposing that any scheme of religion can have no warrant from God which would set it aside, or teach men that they can disobey the moral Governor of the world and be well. But their error is, that they do not see that specialty of the Divine dispensation introduced by the Gospel, which requires, for faith in Jesus Christ, the primary and most important place in our conformity to the will of the Father. Neither do they perceive, that the possession of the disposition, and the strength necessary to fallen man's answerableness to the moral will of God, is inseparable from that faith in the Lord Jesus who is said to be "our life and strength." Their system is, that the performance of our moral obliga-

tion by us, is to be introductory to every enjoyment of the Divine favour and possession of heavenly privileges, and they would make the course of a man's life to be a continued performance by *him* of moral duty, to be rewarded at the *end* with Divine favour and blessing ; whereas, by the Gospel, God invites and commands sinners, as they *are*, to come unto him, and to enter into favour and privilege through Jesus Christ by faith in his name ; and then, *after this act*, and in the position of advantage in which it places them, and with the generous sentiment of love to God with which it inspires them—and aided by the strength of Christ which it secures to them—he enjoins them to go forward, to the strict performance of all righteousness to the end of life : *belief* thus being the first step of a course of morals—the putting on the harness for a struggle against evil—the *commencing* of a work of salvation which they are to “work out with fear and trembling.”

The difference between the mere moralist and the believer is not so much as to the thing to be done ;—both are agreed in the necessity of mo-

rals;—but as to the order in which it is to be performed, and the motives by which it is to be prompted. The moralist's motives are fear, self-interest, and the consideration of the beauty of virtue: but along with these the believer has strong encouragement and hope, and above all, that love to God, responding to the love of redemption, which is the only basis of true morality—the only effectual motive to do the will of God.

The will of God is not seen simply in the authoritative issuing and sanctioning of a code of moral law, to which man, as the subject of Divine government, is to be obedient; but rather is a gracious, directive, admonitory will, as of a Father, enjoining sinners to have recourse to a Saviour, and thereafter to pursue holiness as their great object; to make the exertions—to employ the means—to engage in the practices that are promotive of this great object, that they may be ultimately assimilated in character to God, and matured for that higher state of existence with himself for which he designs them.

They are no doubt, as responsible creatures,

obligated by that moral code, which is the great rule of righteousness in the universe, heightened rather than lowered in its character, and extended rather than diminished in its spiritual demand. But the aspect of benignity it assumes as the admonitory inculcation of a Father—the beneficiality of purpose attaching to it, as part and parcel of a remedial system, and as administered by our Immanuel (“for we are under law to Christ”), give it, when joined to its own intrinsic excellency, that strong recommendation to the heart which may well cause the soul to say with Paul, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man.”

1st, 'The will of God as relates to believers is, that *they should be holy*.—“This is His will, our sanctification.” “He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” * “Be ye holy as I am holy.”

The whole character of God, as developed in the economy of redemption,—the whole structure and

* Eph, i. 4.

provisions of that plan, demonstrate the *intentness* of God to secure the holiness of his people. To be concurrent with this will of our heavenly Father, we too must be intent on the same object.

To suppose a Christian believer not aiming at holiness is an utter absurdity : the instant he ceases to have that as his object, he virtually relinquishes the very salvation for which he laid hold of Christ in believing. He is chargeable with this gross inconsistency, that his faith professes to point at one thing, and the aim of his life at another totally different. For, be it ever remembered, that the salvation which is promised, and which the believer professes to seek when he joins the Lord, is not mere immunity from penalty, nor even the favour of Heaven, but also deliverance from the power of sin in his soul, and the possession of a new and well regulated heart, formed on the model of the moral character of God, and answering to the law which is the transcript of that character. This is what we call holiness in man.

2d, The will of the Father is inculcative of that

exertion in the form of *self-denial* and *resistance to evil* propensity necessary to the development and maturation of the holiness required. "Let a man deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."*

If there exist in the believer the same tendencies and propensities with other men; if he too hath a "body of sin and death," to pollute and weigh down the incipient principles of life in his soul, he must necessarily, in concurring with the will of God, and in carrying out his object of being holy, oppose these propensities by which the development of holiness would be prevented. And he must do so, not merely by wishes, nor even prayers, but by purpose and the exertion of faculty and the guard of vigilance, for though it is true that "it is by the spirit that we mortify the deeds of the body;" that the Spirit of God is the efficient cause in sanctification; yet the faculties of man are the lever by which the Spirit works, and the feeling heart of man is the fulcrum or resting-

* Matth. xvi. 24. Heb. xii. 4.

point on which the pressure of that lever must be felt when the strain is on.

Nothing can be more unreasonable than to suppose, that the processes of the eradication of evil propensity and habit can go on in an indolent and passive state of the soul, or without man's being engaged, as if the exertion were all his own, or without his feeling the strain and fatigue of such exertion on his spirit. In this matter we are "fellow workers together with God;" and we being the weak party in the arduous work, as well as the subjects of the operation, must feel the exertion laborious, and the pain often severe.

The negation of self-denial by the indolent or unconscientious, is represented in Scripture as destructive to faith and the standing it gives: "Holding" (saith Paul in one of his exhortations to Timothy) "faith and a good conscience, which some having put away concerning faith, have made shipwreck." In another striking passage, in the 2d Epistle of Peter, the fruitfulness or success in holiness of the believer is represented as depending on his "adding, with all diligence, to his faith

virtue," or resolute exertion ; and, on the other hand, the failure of all Christian light and comfort is represented as following from the want of this addition to faith : " he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." The obviousness of all that can be advanced to shew the necessity of self-denial might furnish excuse sufficient for passing it over, were it not for the equally obvious fact, that the failure of that practical exemplification of Christianity, which would become them who have received its truth, may be traced mainly to the absence of this self-denying exertion, and, therefore, that it is necessary to press the subject on men's attention and consciences.

How often are men seen to lay the foundation, but indolently neglecting to rear the superstructure ; and, to their shame, they appear as those who have begun to build without counting the cost ; or, to change the metaphor, their field has been sown with good seed, but, through their default in not eradicating the thorns and the briars,

that seed is choked, and they bring no fruit to maturity.

The exertions of self-denial require to be varied and incessant, as well as great, seeing that there are lusts of the mind, as well as the body, to be resisted, and that the ever-varying scenes and circumstances of life furnish new occasions of excitement and temptation to one or other of these; at one time, and in one situation, temperance of body requiring to be vigilantly maintained; at another time, and in different circumstances, sobriety of mind.

3d, The will of the Father enjoins certain direct means for the promotion of holiness, which we are bound to employ.

Many might be mentioned: we shall select one as being most essential and comprehensive, and also as conveying more the idea of a course of exertion toward the great end of sanctification,—we mean the *study* of the *Scriptures of truth*.

The prayer of the Lord for his disciples was,
“ Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is

truth." His address to themselves was, "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken to you."

The instrument of human sanctification, then, is the word of God ; but to make that instrument effectual it must be properly wielded. Here, as in the preceding case, of resisting evil propensities, the Spirit of God may be, yea is, the efficient cause ; but the studious consideration of the truth on our part is demanded, in order to the operation of that cause, and the production of the effect.

Particularly there must be an attentive consideration given toward ascertaining the testimony and authority by which the word is supported, and the specific method by which God proposes to save sinners ; otherwise there can be no faith—no entrance to divine favour—no profit—no holiness. Ignorance of the peculiar scheme of the Gospel, as found with many readers of the Bible, is fatal to the soul.

Again, the study of Scripture has for its object the discovery of the character of God, with whom

we have to do, in all he has revealed of himself ; for until the light of that discovery shines in, we never come to feel the transforming power of the truth, in assimilating us to the Divine character ; we never are changed to the same image “ as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

A slight perusal or a general knowledge of the word, will not enable us to comprehend the divinely attested scheme of deliverance with that fulness and accuracy which would give confidence to the mind to rest thereon. Nor can we collect the many scattered rays of light on the divine character which Scripture furnishes into one focus, so that we could have presented to us a well defined image of the God with whom we have to do, without processes of Scripture investigation very different from those ordinarily employed. A rigid examination into the meaning of Scripture language, a close comparison of different parts bearing on the same subject, a patient investigation of difficulties, will be needed to give full effect to this divinely appointed instrument ; or, to use Scripture lan-

guage, “ We must seek for knowledge as silver, and search for her as hid treasures ; then shall we understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.” All this is necessary for the attainment of intelligent faith, and for the perception of our relations with God. In order that true principle may exist within us, and for the prompting and regulation of suitable practical conduct to follow thereon, we must *apply* the Scriptures more extensively and faithfully than the generality of its readers ; we must ply the understanding with its reasonings, probe the conscience with its awe-striking authority, and pointed denunciation, rouse our dormant hearts by its glowing incentives, and must spread out before our restless activities, the well delineated chart of its moral rules and restrictions.

Although there were no express injunctions of God requiring us to search the Scriptures—to compare spiritual things with spiritual—“ to wait at Wisdom’s gates, and to watch at the posts of her doors ;” yet the very structure of the human mind, and the form of the scripture revelation,

would distinctly show that studious consideration is absolutely necessary to a beneficial result. And why is it that there is so little effect from the diffusion of the scriptures, and the ministry of the truth? It is, because though we have many hearers and readers, we have few students of the Bible who consider closely and take to heart its truths.

4th, The will of the Father demands *good works*, which are the *fruit of holiness*. He requires that “they who believe should be careful to maintain good works;” or, as the apostle Peter has it in a passage already quoted, that they “diligently *add* to their faith,” not only virtue and knowledge, but “temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity.”

The prophet Micah, when instructed of God, under a former dispensation, to address a degenerate people, who, in their fear of judgment, seemed to agitate the question, “Wherewith shall we come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the most High God? shall we come with thousands of rams,” &c., says, “What doth *God*

require of you, but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

The *overt acts* of christian morality are the fruits resulting from the inward processes of sanctification, and have much the same relation to them that the fruits of a good tree have to its growth. The intrinsic value is not calculated in the one case or the other without the fruit, when circumstances allow of its production. A sound practical understanding will naturally value the fruits, which in its view are the beneficial results of Christianity, and will not be satisfied without them; whereas minds of an imaginative cast, like florists who confine their attention to the blossoms, will so overrate the speculative and emotional parts of religion, as to undervalue the fruits. They are so engrossed with the interior, as to have no time nor energy for external good deeds.

God, by laying a powerful emphasis on the *overt act*, whether of sin on the one hand, or of righteousness on the other, decides the question of its vast importance. Of sin's final completion in its outward fruit he thus speaks: "When lust

hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is *finished*, bringeth forth *death*.” *

In the matter of righteousness, pleasing as are the indications of right sentiments and right spirit, God does not allow us to rest upon them, but emphatically points to the fruit. “ By their fruits ye shall know them ; every good tree bringeth forth good fruit,”—thus determining the necessity of the outward deed and act, as the only unequivocal test of character.

It is not necessary to the general object and argument of this discourse, nor would it be practicable, that we should lay down in detail the whole acts or duties which are obligatory on the Christian believer. But a few general observations on the character of his obedience may be proper.

The good deeds of a believer in the Gospel are not a few splendid and isolated acts of virtue, made to shine forth in high relief on the visible exterior presented to the world, like fair but borrowed fruits attached to a barren tree. They run rather into classes, and continued courses of

* James i. 15.

action, agreeing with and resulting from the leading principles of the spiritual system with which he is connected. Thus, for instance, if in believing he hath obtained salvation by the generous love and amazing sacrifices of his Redeemer, and feels the attachment and obligation arising therefrom, he will not only not be seen doing himself, or giving countenance to the doing in others, what would displease or disparage this Redeemer and injure his cause ; but he will give his hearty approbation and outward concurrence to every measure by which Christ's cause may be advanced, and the object which brought him to the world promoted. A professed Christian, taking no part, giving no aid, furnishing no contribution to communicate the saving knowledge of Christ to lost men, or nowise engaged in that class of efforts coming under the name of religious benevolence, would be a perfect anomaly.

Again, the actings of a believer, in the details of justice toward God and men—in the maintaining unswerving integrity in public and private life—in the practice of all relative and social

duties, are regulated by the authority and the light of the divine law, which he hath studied, by the inculcations of his heavenly Father's will, recommended to his heart by all a parent's love. His morality is not a conformity to the maxims and manners of the world. He is in no degree limited by these, he disclaims the empire of fashion; he cannot, he dare not, in accommodation to the changing modes and ideas of men, set aside in the slightest degree, rules which are founded in the unchangeable nature of God, and fixed by his irreversible decrees.

Neither will he take his rule implicitly from men, who may be esteemed wise and good, as if picking up by oracular notices from them, or by servile imitations, the rule of his actions. The word of God, which "dwells in him richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," is the only rule to which he can feel himself, on these points, warranted to conform. And he will reject, if not so readily, yet as certainly, the maxims, and the spirit, and the practice of them who are reputed good, as he does those of the world, if he can

clearly see that they are not in accordance with “the law and the testimony” of his God.

Further, the deeds of the Christian believer are performed in the presence and in the light of the Divine Character, which he has had developed to him by the word. The beholding of this pure and benignant character, we have shewn, has an assimilating effect; and how will not this operate on the spirit and character of the believer’s acting?

His most energetic efforts will be chastened by the awe of a Holy Father’s presence. He will “walk humbly with his God.” Subdued in his spirit by the wisdom and the purity that overshadow him, he will fear, lest, by any rash obtrusiveness or self-seeking, he may go before and offend his God. Animated again unto warmth, by observing the vast and productive benevolence which hath filled the universe with bliss, and which, too, hath benignly visited his own soul, his zeal will be kindled into corresponding activity:—and from this compound state of the mental feelings, what can be expected but a diligent,

yet humble, and unostentatious prosecution of all good?—a delight in being wisely and considerately, yet aboundingly, merciful, like the Father in heaven—an aim, like him, to fill up the sphere he occupies with benefits to the family of man.

One great distinction of Christianity is, that its morals are taught by example as well as precept,—“ Christ hath given us an example that we should follow his steps.” The record of this example is before us, who profess to be disciples, for our imitation. And, O how beautiful would be a walk like Christ’s,—so full of good fruits,—so pure,—so humble,—so zealous,—so patient,—so peaceful ! With what clearness does his example present our duty ! how amply hath it furnished us with words and actions, and a spirit suited to the service of a holy God.

We cannot properly come to the conclusion of this subject, without a few words to the two classes whom we had more or less in view throughout the discussion.

The class whom we have designated the Moralists must see, that, however much we may have

maintained the exclusiveness of Faith as the medium of our connection with the salvation of Christ ; we have also maintained that same faith to be the *first* of a series of dependent acts obedi-
ential to the will of God, and having in it a mighty force, and an infinite importance, as introductory to, and promotive of, a pure and an extended morality.

The other class, whom we may call the Religionists of profession and display, may see that their avowed belief, which is productive only of profession and religious form, devoid of devotedness to the will of the Father, is justly repudiated, and will avail them nothing in the day when every pretension is brought to judgment.

The one and the other of these classes ought seriously to consider not only the danger in which they personally stand as holding fatal error, but the additional judgment awaiting them on account of the evil which the communication of their respective sentiments and spirit does to all around them, for there is no religious sentiment or exemplification, be its author ever so humble, but

tells in some way on society ; and those to which we now refer have been the sources of injury to the church in every age, since the days of their prototypes the Sadducees and Pharisees of Judea.

The moralist, by ignorantly depreciating faith, fosters in himself and others a repugnance to all that is grand, peculiar, and affecting in the gospel scheme, saps the foundation of the very morality for which he contends, and by withdrawing, under a cherished dislike, from the communion of the faithful, excludes himself and all who follow him, from the influence of that better knowledge and purer morality in them, which would instruct him in what he professes to desire.

The religionist of mere profession, on the other hand, is chargeable with presenting before others a defective view, or mere caricature, of the spiritual believer. His character wants what the consciences of all men tell them should be there. He is held as a specimen of religious men, full of all hypocritical pretensions, and no solid worth ; and thus many enquirers into religion are deterred from giving any serious consideration to senti-

ments avowed by a person so inconsistent in conduct, and are probably driven to choose the society, and adopt the sentiments of those, who may be less obviously inconsistent, but who, in their ignorance of the gospel grace, are living under the reign of spiritual death.

We conclude by taking a short glance at some of the *encouragements*, which operate as a compensating power to relieve the load of concern from off the mind, which feels itself engaged to the arduous work of doing the will of the Father in Heaven. “My yoke,” saith Christ, (referring doubtless to some such sustaining power) “is easy, and my burden is light.” A compensating power is not an immunity from the feeling of labour; it does not relieve by taking out the weight from the scale of duty, but by laying a counter-vailing weight of confidence and hope in the opposite scale of encouragement. It thus brings the mind to an equipoise, far more salutary than indolent ease.

The resolution of the believer to pursue the

path of obedience, cannot participate in any degree of the confidence with which men prosecute worldly objects,—a confidence founded on their knowledge of the actual amount of the labour to be undergone, and of the adequacy of their own powers and means to the undertaking. His future course is but imperfectly known to him, and he sees no reason to confide in any powers of his. If he cherishes confidence, it must be not on a personal but a relative basis. His trust is not in what he can do, but in his Saviour, in whom, as the Lord Jehovah, “there is everlasting strength,” and who has embarked all his native and official powers in the enterprise of sanctifying and preserving his people in the face of all opposition. His trust is, that, though not sufficient for any thing as of himself, yet, “through Christ strengthening him, he can do all things.”

No event that can possibly arise is unknown to his Saviour, or unprovided for in the covenant of his peace. There are recorded pledges of the faithfulness of the God of salvation in the word on which faith can lay hold. Paul, speaking of Christ

to believers, says, “ who *shall confirm* you to the end that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* The same Apostle, praying for them on another occasion, that the God of peace might sanctify them wholly, and preserve them blameless to the coming of Christ, adds, “ Faithful is he that calleth you, who also *will do it.*”† And more specifically still, he declares, “ God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able to bear, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”‡

The history of the Church testifies amply to the unfailingness of this faithfulness and power in the past: “ Our fathers trusted in God, and they were not put to shame.” Not the weakest lamb of the flock has been plucked out of his hand. Many of the most timid of the feebler sex, sustained by this mighty power, have been enabled to endure cruel martyrdom with unfaltering but meek resolution. Be it so, that the work of salvation is to be wrought out “ with fear and tremb-

* 1 Cor. i. 8. † 1 Thessalonians, v. 24. ‡ 1 Cor. x. 13.

ling ;” is not the soul sustained by knowing that “ God worketh in us both the will and the deed.”

Next to the assurance of adequate aid, is the conviction of value in the object prosecuted to compensate for the toil of securing it. How must the spirit of man be strengthened and stimulated, by feeling that he is in pursuit of what is worthy of his rational and immortal nature,—what elevates him from degradation to moral liberty and rank among the blessed—what gives him daily satisfaction in peace and regulated feeling, and in the sweet solace of an approving conscience, and holds out to him in reversion an indescribably glorious and everlasting inheritance. For how infinitely less worthy, unsatisfactory, and fading a portion do the men of this world toil with arduous and incessant labour ! Shall they thus “ labour for the meat that perisheth,” and the believer not exert himself for that “ which endureth for ever ?”

We are aware, that the observation of the Christian course in real life, both in themselves and others, is apt to cause discouragements to many, especially the view of their own imperfection.

Happy they, who have their light so far advanced as to shew them that, however discouraged, there is no receding nor desisting from the heavenward way ; who, like Gideon, “ though faint, are yet pursuing.” Is it so, that the progress of sanctification is scarcely perceptible ? let not the persisting mind be dismayed. Paul was forced to complain, “ O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?”

God hath seen right to ordain a long and dreary wilderness course to many before they rest in their portion, as in the case of Caleb of old ; and to all he hath appointed a gradual and generally imperceptible progress, like the growth in the field to which it is compared in Scripture, where are seen in slow succession the blade and the ear, and at length the ripened corn in the ear. “ Be patient, therefore,” saith the Apostle James (v. 7.), “ behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receives the early and the latter rain.” The appearances of the same work in other men operate to discourage men in various ways. Some

appear to have attained an eminence in the ways of God, that it would seem utterly vain to aspire to. Others, again, exhibit so slight an influence of their avowed principles, as to lead us to suppose that there is little attainable in this life.

But did we look with an enlarged view on the works of God and consider their analogy, we would expect such varieties in his Spiritual Kingdom, and would not despond though we did not rank with the highest, neither sorrow as if we were doomed to the sphere of the lowest ; but would, by diligent exertion, seek our own destined place for which God should fit us.

In the firmament, “ one star differeth from another in glory,” but all show forth the glory of God, and are equally the “ framing of his fingers,” and occupy the places he assigned them. May He not have seen it right to have some burning and shining lights in his church ? while others twinkle with a feeble ray, now lighted, then obscured. If, on the earth, which he hath clothed with infinitely varied vegetation, ranging from the lofty trees of the ancient forest, to the scarcely dis-

cernible herb, should it be thought strange, that, among the plants which the Heavenly Father hath planted in His Church, there should be corresponding varieties, some partaking of the qualities of the lofty cedar in Lebanon, and others of those of the lowly sensitive plant affected by every touch? He who constituted such a variety in the physical circumstances of men, might be expected to exhibit a similar variety in their moral condition.

Let us, then, leaving all that concerns us to His infinitely wise arrangement, hold on our way undiscouraged, working what our hand findeth to do while it is called to-day. “May the God of peace sanctify you fully, and preserve you blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Amen.

FINIS.



